

FAMILY ISSUES

ATTITUDES AND VALUES

If you think it was difficult dealing with the facts, wait until you take a look at attitudes and values! Yet the truth is, unless we help explore our own attitudes and values, we will be unable to assimilate the facts we are learning into our own patterns of behavior.

Since one of the primary goals of the Young Men as Fathers program is to help students make responsible decisions, you must be aware of how you view yourself and the world around you.

An individual's values grow from his total environment. When the environment is stable and all of the experiences are congruent, there is little conflict. The family, the church, the school and the community all tend to reinforce the same set of values. This situation, which we often refer to with nostalgia as the "good old days," hardly exists for any one today. Instead, young people are literally bombarded by persistent messages from radio, television, motion pictures, magazines, newspapers, books and comic books that often run counter to what they have learned at home. In addition, the amount of time spent with the family is greatly reduced, since many of the functions performed primarily by the family in the past are being provided by outside agencies. And, of course, the family itself is changing as divorce makes second marriages more common—and multiple parenting a source of additional value conflicts.

Coupled with all these changes is the almost revolutionary phenomenon of the women's liberation movement, which is beginning to affect both males and females in the way they define their roles and raise their children.

In the face of all this confusion, one of our basic tasks is to develop effective decision making skills that will enable you to cope with your rapidly changing environment.

Most of the decisions you make involve choices, which ultimately reflect your values, even when these values have never been clearly defined. Problems often arise when our decisions in one situation may be at cross purposes with our choices at other times. Your own values may be in conflict.

One of the greatest concerns we all have is whether what we do is "normal." This usually means that we not only do not know all of the facts about a given type of behavior, we also have been conditioned to believe that certain things are either all *right* or all *wrong*. The purpose of the activities in this section is two fold: to explore the *range* of behavior that is normal and to examine some of the reasons behind the personal choices that people make. The ultimate objective is to help each student make responsible decisions about what is right for him. It also implies deciding what is *not* appropriate personal behavior while accepting and understanding that same behavior in others.

There is a tendency in all of us to want ready-made answers for difficult questions; there is a corresponding temptation to comply with such requests. You will need to confront and

challenge yourself in helping make your own decisions, rather than falling into the trap of agreeing or disagreeing with an adult viewpoint. The most helpful adult role is to keep the responsibility for decision making squarely where it belongs—on the shoulders of the individual.

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Sexual Identity

Questions for Discussion

1. How are male and female roles determined?
2. Does a woman have to have children to feel she's a real woman?
3. Do men have a stronger sex drive than women?
4. How does a man feel about a woman having an abortion when it's his baby?
5. If you could choose the sex of your baby, which would you choose and why?
6. How would it affect a child if the mother worked and the father took care of the house?
7. Would it be all right for a single person to adopt a child?
8. Would it be all right for a gay couple to raise a child?

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VALUE IDENTIFICATION

Our values about what roles we play in life are all learned. As we grow, we decide what we like and don't like; what we agree and disagree with. Listed below are some statements regarding relationships and attitudes about men and women.

Place a check in the column that signifies your Agreement or Disagreement with each statement. Really think about what you believe! Are these beliefs going to be taught to your child?

<u>A</u>	<u>D</u>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Women are helpless and need a man to take care of them.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Women worry more about their looks than men.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3. Men are more intelligent than women.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Women enjoy keeping house and caring for children.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	5. A woman should decide for herself whether or not to have an abortion.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	6. Husbands or boyfriends should help with the housework.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	7. A woman should not work if she has children.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	8. Women are more emotional than men.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	9. There is no such thing as rape.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	10. Women's Liberation is a good thing.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	11. When people marry they belong to each other.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	12. Men enjoy sex more than women.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	13. Couples should be legally married before they have children.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	14. A woman should dress to please her man.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	15. There is such a thing as a woman's job or a man's job.

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Values

Some of the values listed below are closely related and compatible with each other, while others are contradictory. Not all of these values are given the same degree of support by all people and groups. Some of the values are proclaimed in words only, never in practice.

Achievement and success. Some prize getting ahead in the world. Some people do not like to admit failure.

Activity and work. Some people like to be busy and fill their time with activities. Sometimes work is seen as having a moral as well as an economic value.

Democracy. Distribution of power and authority , people's rule and control are two dominant American values. (Some people carry these political ideals of democracy into their family and social relations and generally do not approve of supreme authority by any one person.)

Efficiency and practicality. Some people prize getting things done, being useful, and finding the easiest way to accomplish something without waste.

Equality and justice. Some people believe in equality of opportunity and the belief that "I am as good as anyone else".

External conformity. In some societies great emphasis is placed on being outwardly alike. What is bought and used (houses, cars, and clothing) as well as in the ways people act and speak and in the opinions they hold.

Freedom. Freedom to make one's own decisions and control one's destiny is a basic value for some.

Humanitarian ways. Giving aid and comfort to the distressed and to the underdog are considered a basic value in some societies.

Individual personality. Integrity, independence, and the individual's right to respect is considered a basic value for some societies.

Material comfort. Some people want good food and clothing, high-quality housing and equipment, good transportation, and high standards of cleanliness. Many expect these as a matter of course and almost feel they have a moral claim to them.

Moral orientation. Some cultures judge things in terms of right and wrong, good and bad, ethical or unethical.

Nationalism and Patriotism. Many people value devotion to national interests and they disapprove of actions and values that are considered to be unpatriotic (sometimes to the degree that they think their way of life is best and should be extended to all humankind).

Progress. Many societies want to be up-to-date and tend to equate newness with goodness, and to believe that things will, or at least should, get better.

Science and secular rationality. Some societies value scientific or technical ways of approaching problems and seeking knowledge through the application of disciplined reason and observation.

Some of these values are shared by people of different cultures, while some are not. Can you add any values considered important to your particular culture or the culture of someone you know. Here are some examples: Some cultures greatly value "the land" or "Mother Earth"; some value tradition, truth, family, mobility, or setting down roots. What functions do you think that these values serve?

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Value Clarification

The Alligator River Story

Abigail and Abner are very much in love with each other. They each live on a different side of a river filled with ferocious alligators; however, a beautiful little bridge over the river allows them to make frequent trips to visit each other. One day a storm washes the bridge away. The lovers are very upset since there is no way they can meet. Abigail stands on the bank of the river every day waiting for some miracle. One day, Sinbad, a sailor, comes sailing down the river. Abigail calls to him and asks him to take her across the river to see Abner. Sinbad is very happy with the idea and says, "Of course, I'll take you across the river, but under one condition. You'll have to sleep with me first."

Abigail breaks into tears. She has never been involved sexually with anyone. She decides to get some advice from a friend named Ivan. Ivan is so cool about it all. He folds his arms and says to her, "That's your decision. I don't want to get involved."

With Ivan's answer, which seems cold to her, Abigail thinks and thinks about her problem and finally decides to sleep with Sinbad. When Abigail finally sees Abner the next day, she tells him the whole story and how she hassled with the problem. Abner is so furious with what Abigail has done that he tells her to go away and never to come back again. She clings to him—crying and pleading, but Abner will have nothing to do with her.

So, Abigail visits another friend named Slug. After telling him the story, Slug decides to go see Abner. He really works Abner over. After all, why should a fellow like Abner mistreat a nice little girl like Abigail?

Assignment: After you have read the story:

1. Rank order the characters in the story. No. 1 would be the person you are most sympathetic with (that you like the best). No. 3 would be the person you are least sympathetic with (that you hate the most), No. 2 would be the person you have no great love or no great hate for, (you just don't care about at all).
2. After you have made your list, write the reasons for your choices. Example: "Who was the person you disliked the most?" "Why?"
3. Compare your list with that of someone in the classroom. Don't pick someone you tend to share values with. Instead, compare and discuss the list with someone you don't know very well. The purpose of this activity is to illustrate both the range of attitudes toward certain types of behavior and the fact that people often select the same person as the best or worst but for different reasons.

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Values Questionnaire

Explain the meaning of the word *values*.

1. List five (or more) values that are most important to you.
2. List the values that you feel are less important to you.
3. Give an example of a time when you had a conflict with someone (parent, friend, or other family member) because you held different values. Describe the opposing values. (Example: Mother nags daughter not to waste her time by reading. Mom wants her to keep "busy." Mom's value is activity or work. Daughter's value is her individual and intellectual development.)
4. What are some values of your cultural group?
5. What are some values of other cultural groups? (Ask someone in your class)

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Family Customs and Traditions: Their Importance

Assignment

One way to understand the similarities and differences in families is to examine the kinds of customs valued by the families and the importance placed on these actions or beliefs.

1. Using the chart on the next page, rate the following customs and traditions in accordance with their importance in your family. Rate them 1, 2, or 3. (1 = very important; 2 = somewhat important; 3 = not at all important.)
 - A. Christmas or Hanukkah dinner together
 - B. Thanksgiving dinner together
 - C. Independence Day fireworks and picnic
 - D. Gifts to family members on birthdays
 - E. Mother's Day/Father's Day gifts or cards
 - F. Celebrating birthdays with member(s) of family
 - G. Decorating Christmas tree
 - H. Labor Day picnic
 - I. Saying grace at meals
 - J. Going to church or temple together
 - K. Bedtime ritual for small children (stories, stuffed animals, kisses, and so forth)
 - L. Making Easter eggs or other decorations
 - M. Visiting with relatives
 - N. Family reunions
 - O. A special dish or refreshment served at certain meals
 - P. Other cultural or religious rituals (specify)
 - Q. New Year's get-together or party as a family
 - R. Memorial Day visit to cemetery (or other regular day for such a visit)
 - S. Eating breakfast together
 - T. Eating dinner together
 - U. Watching television together
 - V. Family vacations
 - W. Family picnic
 - X. Family games
 - Y. Martin Luther King Day holiday celebration
 - Z. Cinco de Mayo

Family Customs and Traditions (continued)

	1	2	3
A			
B			
C			
D			
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X			
Y			
Z			

- Take the customs and traditions list back to your living unit. Ask a Group Supervisor or Youth Counselor or another adult to rate the list of customs and traditions on a scale from 1 to 3, depending on their importance in the family when that person was a child.
- Compare the differences in your rating and the adult rating. How many customs and traditions rated number one were the same? How many were different? How many customs rated number three were the same? How many were different?